

J-Teen Trip to Philadelphia

Veteran's Day Weekend 2018

I spent an incredibly meaningful couple of days in Philadelphia this past Veteran's Day Weekend. I had the opportunity to participate in important service work, get to know other teens with similar passions and goals, and meet members of the Philadelphia community who strive to make a difference. Unlike many of the other J-Teen trips, where the goal is to address a natural disaster, we went to Philadelphia to gain a better understanding of the local Jewish community and the social issues that impact them and the city at large.

My favorite part of the trip was when we visited Cradles to Crayons, where they provide children up until the age of 12 with essential things, such as clothing, school supplies, etc. Throughout our time at their warehouse, we sorted coats and organized the donations we all brought with us. Ultimately, we brought 700 pounds of donations and we sorted 1,100 lightweight coats, which was really exciting for us and the organization! I was really impressed by how the organization functions in order to preserve the dignity of the individuals receiving products from them. They ask the social workers what the families need, as well as what they want, so that the recipients feel more like they are going to a store, rather than showing up for a "hand-out". The volunteer organizer shared a really impactful story with us; one that will stay for me forever. She told us that there were two young sisters who shared one coat and that because they had to walk to school, each day they had to decide which of the two of

them would be able to go. This made me reflect on all that I am so fortunate to have and I am even more inspired to give back to others.

*Gemilut chasadim*, acts of loving-kindness, and *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, are Jewish values that I hold very close to my heart and find to be particularly meaningful and special in the work I do with J-Teen. I am so grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the significant and impactful work that J-Teen does and I cannot wait for more service trips and experiences to come!